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THE RUNAWAY TRAIN...



THERE used to be a children's song about a run-away train. On reflection, that was quite positive news - because now we've got an entire run-away industry.

Certainly it's running away from government. This was made very obvious last month when the new Transport Minister, Geoff Hoon, said he was in favour of electrifying the track. Only minutes later the Rail Regulator said he wouldn't be doing any such thing. There seems to be some confusion here concerning the train driver and the oil-rag.

But this is only a domestic spat. The rest of the railway has run away over the sea – to just about every known part of the globe.

Some sections of what was once 'British' rail has popped over the channel to France. The Gallic company Keolis, along with Go-Ahead, runs Govia, who are responsible for Southern, Southeastern and London Midland.

Other parts of our railway system are controlled from the Netherlands. The Dutch state-owned railway NedRailways, in a joint venture with Serco, runs MerseyRail and Northern.

And then it's off to the Far East to meet MTR, a company based in Hong Kong, that is, unsurprisingly, responsible for the Hong Kong Mass Transport System. Perhaps less expected is that, with Laing, it owns the London Overground network.

Runaway freight trains are also a frequent sight. The German state railway Deutsche Bahn AG owns EWS, while Freightliner's owners are from further afield. Freightliner is the property of an investment firm from Bahrain.

The companies that lease rolling stock to British train operators have similarly run away. Last month came the announcement that Porterbrook Leasing has been sold. Its purchasers are a consortium led by Germany's Deutsche Bank, and including Antin Infrastructure Partners, a fund run by France's BNP Paribas. Angel Trains, meanwhile, was sold to an Australian consortium organised by Sydney-based Babcock and Brown.

So there we are. It's not a runaway train we're dealing with – the whole ruddy lot's gone bar the track!

This isn't meant as a jingoistic complaint. My point is that the British railway network is owned by a selection of owners, based at various points of the globe from Paris to Australia and all anxious to make a quick Hong Kong dollar or Bahraini Dinar. How much motivation do they have to provide an integrated, socially-motivated, reasonably priced rail system for the UK? Would that be nil, nada or none?

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY

NO PENSIONER POVERTY, NO CUTS IN SOCIAL SERVICES!

AT THE end of October the National Pensioners Convention, with the backing of 15 national unions including ASLEF, held a rally at Central Hall, Westminster, before supporters lobbied their MPs about growing concern of 'pensioner poverty' **reports P. J. Smith.**

ASLEF was well represented with members of its Retired Members Committee, Executive Committee and representatives from branches including Kings Cross, St Pancras, Bishop Stortford, Brighton, Arncliffe and even Ayr in Scotland.

EC member Simon Weller spoke for ASLEF at the top table in Westminster Hall and gave a good account of our fight. He correctly stated that the state pension is under attack, and is being allowed to wither on the vine. We have a fight on two fronts – the first being to bring the state pension above the official poverty level.

As I am sure you are aware, the national state pension is 100 years old this year. In 1908, after a great deal of lobbying, the government decided to grant a pension of five shillings to those of 70 years of age who had been in employment. That figure was 25% of the average wage. Today the pension is £90, which is only 15% of the average wage – and falling. This is all in spite of official government figures saying if you have an income of less than £150 a week you are in the 'poverty trap'.

They refuse to do anything about it, even though there is currently a surplus of £46 billion in the National Insurance fund – and rising. When they retire, 60% of most



ASLEF delegates begin to gather at Westminster. The eagle-eyed will spot the two who are not ASLEF members!

people's income, even if they have private pension schemes, will be their state pension.

Our second fight is to stop the attack by employers on our final salary pension. We must not lose sight of the fact that your contributions, and those of your employer, are part of your wages. They are not a gift.

We need less interference from government on pensions, but more support from it to guarantee to underwrite the future of the state pension. As regards the rail industry, retired members are proud of the response from the rail unions. We need to keep up the pressure and the unity.



Churchill joins in: Even our war leader looks as if he's heading for the lobby!

RESTORED ASLEF BANNER

A RESTORED 100-year-old ASLEF union banner has gone on show at the Museum in March in Cambridgeshire. The museum took possession of the banner, painted on silk, sometime in the 1980s.

The Textile Conservation Centre in Winchester carried out the repairs and conservation at a cost of £20,000. Funding came from the Pilgrim Trust, a national body that helps preserve historic and industrial artefacts, and from donations, including ones from the March branch of ASLEF, other ASLEF branches, and the county museum service.

The museum's vice-chairman Richard Munns, the son of an ASLEF member, says he is delighted that the banner will be going on show.



The March banner getting ready for display at the March Museum. Picture: CAMBS TIMES



EC members Simon Weller and Nigel Gibson join the retired members. National RMS Secretary Tony West sports a natty ASLEF hat



Splendid sentiments – and reckless spelling!

'LITTLE EFFECT' OF AGE DISCRIMINATION LAWS According to an online survey carried out by The Age and Employment Network (TAEN), just 13% of jobseekers aged over 50 feel that the age discrimination legislation introduced in October 2006 has helped older people find work. Only 10% of respondents said they had 'never experienced age discrimination when looking for work'. TAEN says the law has clearly not eradicated discrimination on grounds of age but it is especially difficult in recruitment for an individual to prove discrimination and take legal action.

THE REAL FACE OF LONDON TORIES

KEITH NORMAN says that the 'real face of Conservatism' was exposed today as Boris Johnson announced the cancellation of £3.7 billion of London transport improvements planned by Ken Livingstone. 'Predictably, the poorer areas of the capital will



suffer most,' Keith says.

The new mayor is to combine increasing fares above inflation for the coming eight years with dropping ten planned transport initiatives. The cuts will have particular impact on the East End and especially the Thames Gateway. 'It looks as if 100,000 homes will be built that will have no transport infrastructure,' the general secretary commented.

The cancelled projects include ● the £500 million Thames Gateway Bridge which was planned to relieve congestion on other river crossings in East London (and which had already been granted £350 million of government-backed funding)

● plans to bring back trams to Central London after a 50-year absence. The Cross River Tram would have run over the river between Euston and Waterloo ● the extension of the

Docklands Light Railway to Dagenham Dock

● the £170 million Crystal Palace link in Croydon's tram network

● plans to replace Oxford Street's diesel buses with an electric tram

● proposals to create more pedestrian space on London's major squares.

'This is a terrible blow for the people of London and for the future of transport in the capital,' Keith says. 'The Mayor simply says that 'there isn't the funding' – but I would argue that transport improvements are things you can't afford not to do. Scrapping the trams plans is especially short-sighted and foolish.

'These slashes in public services in London are a warning about what could happen nationally should people of Boris' views and outlook form a government in the future.'



REGULATOR SETS HARSH TARGETS FOR NETWORK RAIL

THE Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has allocated a budget of £26.5 billion to Network Rail (NR) for the five years from April 2009 – considerably less than the £29.1 billion which NR thinks it needs. The regulator says that NR should be able to work within this budget – which means cost reductions of 21%.

'It is difficult to see how they manage to come up with a figure of this precision,' says ASLEF's Keith Norman. 'And it does make you wonder about the good sense of reducing expenditure on the infrastructure just as rail is expanding so rapidly.'

At the same time that the regulator says punctuality should improve from 90% to 92% by 2014, it also warned that passengers will face weekend engineering works for years to come.

Last New Year, NR was fined a record £14 million by the regulator for the engineering over-runs. 'Effectively this means that the travelling public has to pay twice,' Keith added. 'First they suffer the inconvenience, and then NR has less money to improve the infrastructure.'

BRITISH RAIL – ANOTHER NAIL



IN 1995, Tony Blair described rail privatisation as 'an absurd hotchpotch of private

companies linked together by a gigantic bureaucratic paperchase of contracts'.

Although he did nothing about it, he was right. Further proof has emerged from the latest developments in the ownership of the Roscos – the people who own (and lease to the TOCs) the country's rolling stock.

Last month it was announced that Porterbrook Leasing (owned since 2000 by Abbey National, the UK bank which is now part of Spain's Santander) has been sold to a consortium led by Germany's Deutsche Bank, and including Antin Infrastructure Partners, a fund run by France's BNP Paribas.

The news came four months after the biggest Rosco, Angel Trains, was sold to an

Australian consortium organised by Sydney-based Babcock and Brown.

The other Rosco is owned by HSBC 'the world's local bank'.

'It is another example of how impossible it is becoming to provide a coherent long-term rail strategy for this country,' said Keith Norman.

● The recession does not seem to be affecting the profits of the private rail companies. Stagecoach has announced that its revenue growth in UK rail over the last six months has increased by 8.3% - but isn't sure this is enough. The company said it was ready to implement cost savings in its rail businesses 'if and when appropriate'.

Earlier in the week Arriva said it was expecting 'substantial' earnings and revenues growth for the year – and First Group's half-yearly results have seen adjusted operating profits up by 75.8%!

48 HOUR OPT-OUT COULD END THIS MONTH

LAST month the European Parliament's employment social affairs committee voted – by 35 to 13 – to scrap the opt-out facility of the Working Time Directive. This month it will be put before the European Parliament for ratification.

The TUC's Brendan Barber was delighted at the social affairs committee decision. 'Our long hours culture, which has been shored up by the opt-out, has risked the health of many UK workers,' he said. 'Regularly working more than 48 hours increases the chance of suffering from heart disease and stress related illness, as well as diabetes and other ailments.'

As the Parliament is aiming to overturn the position of national governments, it would need the support of more than 60% of MEPs.

RAIB REPORT BLAMES NETWORK RAIL FOR GRAYRIGG DERAILMENT

THE Rail Accident Investigation Board (RAIB) in its investigation into the Grayrigg derailment has concluded that Network Rail failed to properly construct a section of track and to carry out safety checks as scheduled.

The RAIB said that track points had been allowed to deteriorate because Network Rail had an 'incomplete understanding' of stretcher bars used in the design of the points.

The report said, 'Within Network Rail, there was an incomplete understanding of the design, maintenance and inspection of the design.' It added that an inspection which 'should have detected' the damage was missed five days prior to the accident.

Network Rail said it was 'devastated to discover' that 'the tragedy at Grayrigg was caused by the failure of our infrastructure.'

WATERLOO SLOWLY EMERGES FROM MOTHBALLS

THE union has consistently pointed to the folly of leaving the top-notch former Eurostar platform mothballed (at a cost of half a million pounds a year) while it is adjacent to a station full of desperately overcrowded platforms.

Last month Paul Clark, a transport minister, told Parliament, 'Works to convert one platform of Waterloo International for domestic use will be completed by December 2008. The Department continues to work with South West Trains with a view to some existing services operating into and out of platform 20 from next year.'

He was less definite, however, about it being used for services from further afield, like Hampshire and the south-west.



The ASLEF Annual Report for 2007 said 'The cover depicts the roof of the Eurostar station at Waterloo which closed during this year when the operation moved to St Pancras. The Waterloo station, at enormous cost, remains 'mothballed' Photo: Els Dekker



SQUASH IN FCC

Tony Farmer tells us that the First Capital Connect company council is making gradual progress on cab conditions. The 313s will have air conditioning installed

by now and there is funding for the 317s when suitable equipment is identified. Air cooling on 319s has been fitted and there has been a desk mod fitted to improve leg-room on the 319/0 and 319/2. They are arranging a cab visit to the 321, and although the 365 has been fitted with air conditioning, there are faults which are being worked on. The 377/5 also has air conditioning fitted.

NEW TERMINAL AT SWINDON

A NEW rail terminal has opened at Swindon which will transport locally-built Honda Civics and CR-Vs by rail. The Keypoint terminal will transport around 23,000 vehicles a year from the Honda factory to the Channel Tunnel - which will mean almost 3,000 fewer transporters on the roads. There will be obvious benefits to rail freight, local traffic congestion and pollution.

Freight carried by rail has increased by more than 60% since the mid-1990s and the government has pledged to provide around £200 million for the development of a strategic rail freight network.

Two trains, each carrying over 200 cars, will run most weeks from Keypoint. To transport them by road would need at least 30 HGV lorries.

Last summer's 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway' White Paper set out plans for carrying 30% more freight on the network by 2014/15, including the development of a £200 million Strategic Freight Network. In 2007 the Department for Transport also announced that £150 million will be dedicated to improving rail freight infrastructure, including wider gauge clearance to enable larger wagons, capable of carrying more freight, to run on the network.

'This is good news,' says Keith Norman. 'It is a sign of the steady progress of our 'Freight on Rail' campaign.'

COMMUNITY FOR CREWE TO DERBY

THE rail service on the North Staffordshire Line, between Crewe and Derby, has been designated as a community rail service. The government claims that this will make for 'a more flexible approach' to be adopted by East Midlands Trains working alongside the local community rail partnership.



ARRIVA TRAINS WALES ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Arriva Trains Wales until 28 February 2009

TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Transpennine Express until 28 February 2009

FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on First Capital Connect until 24 January 2009.

FIRST SCOTRAIL ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on First Scotrail until 28 February 2009

TWELVE DEAD THIS YEAR AT LEVEL CROSSINGS

Network Rail says that already 12 people have died on unmanned level crossings this year. It is to launch another campaign to remind motorists about the dangers of ignoring warning signs or jumping the lights.

DECEMBER EVENT AT LIVERPOOL STREET WILL MARK KINDER-TRANSPORT ANNIVERSARY

THE union has been approached for support for an event taking place on 2nd December at London's Liverpool Street Station to mark the 70th anniversary of the first arrival of the Kindertransport in Britain on 2nd December 1938.

That was the day the first Jewish child refugees from Nazi Germany arrived in Britain, the start of what became known as the Kindertransport. Ten thousand children from Nazi-occupied Europe were allowed into the country, leaving their families behind to completely uncertain fates. Many of these children passed through Liverpool Street Station, now the site of a memorial square and statue to those events, on their way to their final destinations across Britain.

A theatrical event will take place throughout the day recognising the role of railway workers in this remarkable rescue exercise.

A report of the event will be included in the January edition of the Journal.

COMPUTER PACKAGE FOR SLIPS AND TRIPS

THE Health and Safety Executive is to provide an on-line learning package which will provide slip and trip guidance through interactive learning. It will be available at the start of next year.

Union safety advisor Dave Bennett says the package – called, unsurprisingly, STEP – is an easy way to learn about slips and trips, how they are caused, why preventing them is important and how to tackle them. 'It contains both a generic course which can be used by ASLEF H&S Reps, and courses specifically designed for other industries.'

The Step package will include quizzes, videos, animations and interactive sequences to make learning more interesting and accessible.

The free tool will be

available for the use of safety representatives and trainers as well as managers and health and safety professionals, and will be arranged in three levels, introductory, intermediate and advanced. The lowest level should take about 20 minutes and the middle one just over an hour.

The HSE says it has produced an on-line tool, rather than a booklet because 'unlike published guidance, it can be updated quickly, ensuring that HSE constantly provide up to date and relevant slip and trip guidance'.

It will be posted on the HSE website in the New Year, but if you want more information, or you'd like to register an interest, you can visit <http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/step/index.htm>

HOPOI CONFERENCE ON 13 DECEMBER

Hopoi ('Hands Off the People of Iran') is holding a conference on 13 December to discuss how to campaign against the threat of a military attack on Iran, and how to avoid another disastrous war in the Middle East. The event will be held at Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, London N19.

ASLEF agreed to affiliate to Hopoi at its annual conference (AAD) this year on the basis that it opposes both an imperialist war and the country's theocratic regime.

Hopoi believes that the people of Iran are in real danger of war because the United States and its allies are 'intent on regime change from above and are seriously considering options to impose this - sanctions, diplomatic pressure, limited strikes or perhaps bombing the country back to the Stone Age'. It is also convinced that the



theocratic regime is using the international outcry against its alleged nuclear weapons programme to divert attention away from the country's endemic crisis by deflecting popular anger onto foreign enemies and thus prolong its reactionary rule.

It proposes a threefold programme for the anti-war movement in the UK. Firstly to oppose any imperialist attack on Iran, secondly to publicise the reactionary nature of the Tehran regime and thirdly to build links with all progressive forces fighting the regime. For further information visit www.hopoi.org



Colin with Alison Bingham of the East Midlands Development Agency

DERBY COLIN GOES FOR HONOURS!

TWO years after achieving his first NVQ Level 3 qualifications in Communications, Colin Berry, a driver with East Midlands Trains, is now onto the second stage of an Open University BA History degree.

He says he's grateful for the support of his company's union learning reps. With their encouragement he may never have ventured back into a classroom, a place he happily deserted when he was 16. But now he's back with a vengeance!

He began with a German course before taking up Communications at Derby College, where he was funded by the unionlearn EMDA Management Skills Project. He's now funding himself through the Open University.

He says, 'You can achieve anything with union and company support networks. It's not only useful for work, there is a feeling of satisfaction through personal development, and confidence from qualifications.'

ASLEF union learning rep Chris Nutty says, 'A lot of our learners go on to do other courses, but Colin's achievements are amazing. He's a credit to the lifelong learning agenda.'

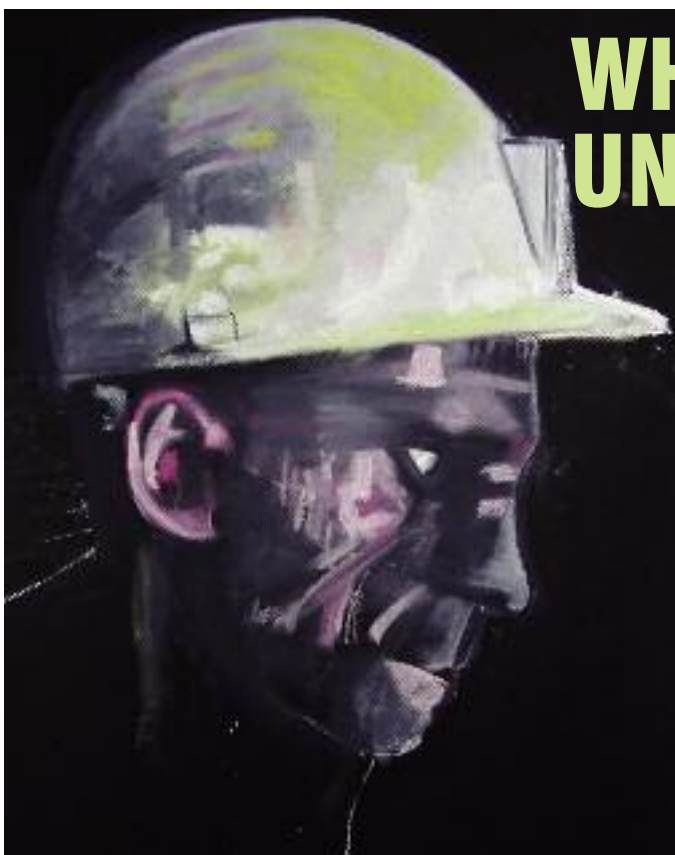
NEW SAFETY RESEARCH SITE

A free and interactive website has been set up which allows you to view a database of more than 140 science and research articles related to health and safety. Organised by Science and Research Outlook (SRO), it can bring the science and research output of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to your desk and allow you to add your comments and experiences. To receive the next edition of SRO or download past articles visit www.hsesro.com

WORKPLACE REPS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT?

The public service union PCS is seeking legal rights for workplace environmental reps. It wants them to have reasonable time off during working hours for such tasks as carrying out environmental audits, promoting local environmental initiatives and carrying out environmental risk assessments. The union argues that such a move would be in keeping with TUC policy on climate change.

PCS points out that Energy minister Ed Miliband recently announced that the government was to increase its target for reducing carbon dioxide emissions from 60% to 80% by 2050. Its Assistant General Secretary Chris Baugh says, 'We believe that union environmental reps have a key role to play in this transition by ensuring that employers meet their carbon reduction targets, by raising awareness of green issues in the workplace and by ensuring that environmental issues are included in the bargaining agenda.'



WHAT DOES A TRADE UNIONIST LOOK LIKE?



Gregor Gall, Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Hertfordshire, asks, 'What does the average member of a union look like today? And is there such a thing as the 'average' union member?'



THE traditional image of the 'average' union member in both public perception and the media can be summed up in the characterisation of 'male, pale and stale'. To this we could add 'frail'. In other words, the average member is thought to be a) not a woman, b) white, c) a longstanding member and d) of increasingly age or just plain old.

For a slightly older generation, the image of the cartoon character of Andy Capp (as used in the KitKat adverts), along with Woodbine cigarette and whippet, is another popular conception. He was northern man: a white, male, full-time, manual worker.

But do these stereotypes have any resonance with the reality today?

Fortunately, there is some rather good data by which to answer this question in a definite manner. The government, through the Office of National Statistics, carries out an annual survey called the Labour Force Survey.

So in 2007, women are more likely to be union members than men. Density – the proportion of members out of all potential members – is higher for woman (29.6%) than for men (26.4%). For decades until 2004, it was the reverse – men were more likely to be members than women.

CHANGING WORKPLACES

The change reflects two important underlying factors. First, women now comprise the majority of the workforce in Britain today, and second, women are more likely to work in the public sector where union membership is much higher than in the private sector. So density in the public

sector was 59% but just 16% in the private sector in 2007.

With some 93% of all union members being white in 2007 – an over reflection of the 89% of the population being white – black workers (29.4%) are more likely to be union members than white (28.3%) with Asian (23.2%) and Chinese (16.7%) workers less so.

Age wise, less than 10% of those in the age group 16-24 are now members while the figure for 35-49 year olds is 32% and higher still for over 50s in 2007. It will be no surprise then to find out that there are increasing proportions of workers who have never been union members.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Regionally speaking, densities are higher in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland than in England. But even in England, densities are still higher in the north than the south and Midlands. For example, density is nearly twice as high in Northern Ireland (39.7%) as it is in the south east of England (London excluded) at just 21.0%.

In terms of occupations, the professions (like teaching, social work and nursing) as well as technical grades are far higher unionised than skilled workers or sales workers. Industrially, and outside of the public sector, transport and communication and the utilities (gas, water, electricity) are the best unionised at 41% and 49% respectively. By contrast, retail, leisure, agriculture and manufacturing are very poorly unionised. There are some areas which are either 'no go' or 'never have been' for unions.

Although there is no specific data for railway workers or train drivers, it is clear that the skilled grades in the industry have some of the highest densities amongst both the private and public sectors.

Permanent workers are nearly twice as likely to be union members as temporary workers while full-time workers are four times as likely to be unionised as part-time workers.

SIZE MATTERS

Those workers with long records of services in an industry or for an employer also display more likelihood of being union members and the importance of workplace size is still evident.

In 2007, with workplaces of less than 50 workers, density was 18.0% while in workplaces with more than 50 workers, it was 37.2%. The same basic pattern is true of small and larger companies.

Because ASLEF is a dedicated union for train drivers then it has a clearly defined role for its members. This means ASLEF's identity is both a powerful recruitment and organising tool as well as the foundation of a deep bond of reciprocal loyalty between members and union, and helps to explain the high level of union density amongst train drivers.

Overall, it should be clear that there is not really any such thing as 'the average union member'. To a greater or lesser degree, the union movement rightly reflects the dominant composition of the workforce in any one industry or sector in terms of sex, race, age and so. The key is to use this as the basis for recruitment and expansion.

SLEEPWALKING TO TRAGEDY

Paul Overington, a train driver working for Southern in Brighton, has written a moving and disturbing account of a tragic death at his depot. It is an emotive piece of writing and some of his conclusions may not be universally shared. However Paul's honesty and commitment alone made it impossible not to print

ON 15 October this year I experienced the saddest day of my driving career when I attended the funeral of a colleague who took his own life at just 34 years of age.

To say the funeral was moving doesn't even begin to tell the story. It was heartbreaking to hear such great tributes from a congregation of over 600 about this highly talented athlete and loving father to a six year old girl.

He followed in his grandfather's footsteps and was thrilled to bits when he passed out as a driver at Brighton.

His parents even filmed him emerging from Warrior Square tunnel on his maiden trip when he was seen punching the air and shouting, 'This is for you, Granddad!'

To say I am incensed at this terrible loss is an understatement. How can a young man in his prime make this awful decision? And how was it that nobody saw there was a problem?

What stuck in my mind were the numerous comments made about the sleep deprivation that Luke had experienced ever since he became a Driver on Southern. I'm sure this is a familiar tale around the entire network.

Imagine how we felt when one of his sisters said, 'I hope you can sleep now, Luke.'

Tear-jerking wasn't the word.

We have drivers at Brighton who need to make their way to work from far afield to book on. This can put an extra three

hours on their day. The problem is that they can't move nearer to their home depot because of an agreement we have that says they 'have to be at their allotted depot for three years before applying to move to a depot nearer to their home'.

The answer we get from management - and ASLEF - when we challenge this unfair practise is, 'They knew this when they applied for the job.'

When a driver has to revert to sleeping in the quiet room this should set alarm bells ringing and alert management that they ought to investigate accordingly.

Well, Southern and ASLEF, this is not acceptable to us. Instead of campaigning about free travel and other conditions like that, our union should start tackling the real issues that are affecting our members and their lives. Fatigue is a real and serious issue at a lot of depots around the country.

I am aware this is a product of privatisation. You have to agree with the 'old school' when they talk about 'The good old BR days.'

It is very sad that Luke couldn't talk to anyone. I would love to know how far the 'chain of care' was taken. Or was it just a case of following procedures and, therefore, meeting the obligations?

It is a sad fact that we have managers who cannot be approached and this is a huge failing on the Southern's part when it appoints managers from within the driving grade.

Don't get me wrong. I accept



that some are very good at their job and genuinely show concern for their drivers. But equally I am afraid to say that when everything is running smoothly, there is no problem. But when you ask for assistance, a different approach comes to the forefront.

If a driver is interviewed by an incompetent or poor manager, the result can be to put fear into the driver's mind. Why? Because the conversations always go back to the questions, 'Are you fit to drive trains?' and 'How long do you see yourself being unfit?'

I even know of a case where a driver who was certified sick by his doctor was ordered to attend a company medical r two weeks later. Perhaps they didn't believe him. Who knows?

Southern, please don't insult me by saying this is not the case, because I am a local rep and have heard this on numerous occasions from our members.

I have seen grown men and women with a genuine fear of losing their licence because

they will not be able to meet their obligations to drive trains due to ill-health.

Neither is this a recent problem. I can remember in 2001 a driver was given 12 weeks notice for an *alleged* safety of the line incident. He was only reinstated after the intervention of our union and a resolution from our ASLEF branch telling South Central this would not be acceptable to our members.

This man was reduced to a nervous wreck all the time that he was waiting for his hearing - and, Southern, you know that things haven't changed. Too often it is a case of, 'Come and tell me your problems. If I like them you'll be alright. If I don't, I'm sure we can find you alternative work. Maybe.'

The whole chain of care structure needs to be addressed. Perhaps one way forward would be to appoint specialised managers to deal with problems of this nature.

In the interim, R.I.P Luke Veness, Brighton Driver, aged 34 years. Seniority date 23/10/06

LOUISE ELLMAN IS KEEPING A CRITICAL EYE ON THE DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT

REPORTS CARY GEE

SIX months ago, Louise Ellman, Labour MP for Liverpool Riverside was elected unopposed to the Chair of the House of Commons Transport Committee, replacing the redoubtable Gwyneth Dunwoody, who died earlier this year. Under the leadership of Dunwoody, the Committee, with its remit to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department of Transport, achieved a profile unmatched by other Commons Committees and in doing so became one of the most powerful scrutinising bodies in Parliament.

So can we expect the Transport Committee to retain its reputation for no-nonsense, no-holds-barred interrogation of the department in the post-Dunwoody era?

'Gwyneth was inspirational, committed and fearless. She said what she thought and wouldn't be deterred from doing what she wanted to do. She was also very supportive of people she worked with. But everybody has to put their own stamp on things. I'm a different personality with a different approach'.

ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE

Ellman sees the Transport Committee as an advocate for change - for pointing out where things have gone wrong and for recommending ways to fix them. She says, 'It's not just about words - but about influencing policy.'

Ellman believes that increasingly the government heeds the advice of herself and her colleagues on the Transport Committee

and she expects this trend to continue. She also anticipates that the current economic downturn is likely to damage public transport. 'Less economic activity does affect people's mobility,' she says, and as a result she feels passenger numbers may fall. She is less concerned by a drop in capital investment, believing the government is serious about meeting future transport needs.

A priority for Ellman is tackling overcrowding. She is dismissive of a recent redefining of 'overcrowding' by the National Audit Office, which says that a train is not overcrowded if fewer than 30% of passengers are standing.

'They can say what they like. The reality is the same for the people standing. The numbers are unacceptable. It's increasingly a major issue.'

BACKING FOR ELECTRIC AND HSR

Ellman believes that in future the Railways will need to be electrified and is critical of what she calls 'the government's lack of vision'. She would like the government to commit not only to electrification but also to high-speed rail, and promises to press new Secretary of State, Geoff Hoon, with whom she says she has 'a good working relationship,' on both issues when he makes his first appearance before the Committee. I ask Ellman whether she has signed ASLEF's online petition to Downing Street to electrify the railways. She hasn't. She says that 'as an MP there are more effective ways to pursue things' but she is adamant in her support for the campaign, and for the introduction of high-speed rail. Perhaps predictably she is critical of

Conservative party attempts to link high-speed rail with the building of a new runway at Heathrow.

'They are committed to opposing T3 without looking at the alternatives. I strongly support high-speed rail - but we can not ignore the importance of air travel'.

NETWORK STILL SUFFERING

Another area Louise Ellman hopes to look into is the organisation of the rail network which she claims 'has never recovered from privatisation.'

'For the first five years we just ignored the mess. Now we have to put the pieces together again. I am concerned about the fragmentation. Franchisees must recognise the need for longer term investment and that they also have to perform.'

She voices concern about the bonuses paid to Railtrack managers while the track falls into disrepair. She points out that as Network Rail does not distribute profits it is 'within the public sphere', and she sees it as her job to make the company more accountable to the passengers it carries.

'The government is slowly coming round to the idea that reinvestment in the railways should become part of the deal for TOC's,' Ellman says. Making this a reality is all part of her agenda. Ellman herself travels by train twice a week and claims the rise in passenger journeys indicates the success of the railways. On the other hand it also means that she encounters at first-hand the delays that so enrage passengers when she travels on the West Coast mainline. 'The last one was due to a point's failure'.

Ellman is under no illusions that a lot more





Louise Ellman, Chair of the House of Commons Transport Committee

has to be done if the government is to meet its target of reducing carbon emissions by 80% by 2050.

FREIGHT 'ROUTINELY IGNORED'

She is also convinced that 'Electrification of the railways must be central to future transport policy, as must a shift to carrying freight on the railways - a subject that has been routinely ignored'.

Ellman is receptive to submissions by trade unions, including ASLEF with whom she has already met. But she also believes that the government must also listen to passengers. The most urgent passenger issue in her in-tray is pricing and the fares policy. She says she would like internet fares - which are often cheaper than standby fares - made available to everyone. 'It's a great concern that the poor who might not have access to the internet miss out on special deals'.

Lastly I ask Louise Ellman about the bonuses paid to Network Rail bosses, and her exasperation finally shows. 'I have already castigated the Chief Executive, making it abundantly clear that rewarding failure is not an option'.

Although disagreements occur on the Committee, Ellman strives to reach a consensus where she can. 'Obviously a unanimous recommendation carries more weight.' She also acknowledges that the Committee has not always achieved everything it has set out to achieve, but Ellman is optimistic that the government is increasingly prepared to include the findings of the Committee in transport policy.

Given the Chair's determination to succeed there is no reason why the Transport Committee should not play an even greater role in creating a railway fit for the twentieth century ...

CALFE CORNER

OPEN ACCESS, ASLEF CHARM AND COMPO CATS ...



Dave Calfe, EC member for District Six, comments on some of the issues facing the union at the end of 2008 ...

OPEN ACCESS, CLOSED RIGHTS

I have previously written in the Journal about 'open access' companies and the insecure employment they can provide. Unfortunately this year another one has ceased operating - and the drivers have been made redundant.

In 2007, FM Rail went into administration after making three drivers redundant the previous summer. Their operating side was taken over by Victa Westlink who turned things around and started recruiting more drivers. The parent company of Victa Westlink was then taken over by Stobarts who cancelled the application for their own safety case.

The new management team at Stobart then decided to only run luxury dining trains called The Stobart Pullman under the DRS safety case. This new management team told the 12 drivers that their jobs were safe, but then immediately started making drivers redundant one by one.

Less than 12 months later the last 5 drivers were made redundant when the Pullman services ceased. So again colleagues please consider very carefully before joining any open access company.

ASLEF MEANS EFFECTIVE BARGAINING

During this year we have seen several companies balloted for industrial action - and in the vast majority of cases we have resolved the issues of concern to us. The satisfactory resolution to these disputes demonstrates what can be achieved when all the drivers concerned are members of a single craft trade union - and not fragmented off into other unions.

Crosscountry provides a good example. In a short space of time our members returned two ballots for industrial action in favour of action in excess of 90%, which allowed the negotiators a satisfactory outcome to the dispute.

I'm sure that some employers would love to see the back of ASLEF. Why do they want that? Because of our stunning good looks and charm? Or because of our effectiveness and organisation in dealing with them?

COMPO CULTURE

A lot is made of the compensation culture in the world today, which is probably better known as 'compo'. In the press this is aimed at those individuals who seek it for various reasons against private or public bodies. I would say the newest and most thriving compensation culture is that which has evolved in the rail industry.

I imagine that the companies operating today cannot believe their luck at the easy money to be made by compo, much of which is at the expense of the tax payer. I don't know how this works in the other transport sectors. Can you imagine an airliner causing a delay at Heathrow and what the delay attribution would then be worldwide? Or a bus that breaks down in the city centre?

There will always be a level of delay on the railway. If there is a need for delay attribution and money to change hands as a result, then instead of being passed to or between the train operators why can't it be reinvested in the rail industry via the DFT? This would surely be better than filling the ever-growing wallets of the 'compo cats'.

Much has been made recently of the city bonus culture and its effect on the stock market, but nothing has been said of the easy money to be made by the companies in the privatised world of rail franchising. It looks to me that the rail franchising business is 'no risk' - take the money when times are good and chuck the keys back when it's not. Where's the risk in that?

FREEDOM OF NON-INFORMATION

I have had a response from the information commissioner to my enquiry regarding the pensions dispute which took place in November 2007 (reported in the August Journal).

It says that due to the volume of complaints they have received that it will be several months before I will hear from them! This I find strange - that the government's own departments, who brought the Freedom of Information Act into law, appear not to be applying that law which has resulted in the commissioners department appearing to be snowed under!

HEATHROW DOESN'T NEED EXPANSION – RAIL DOES

Last month ASLEF joined five other unions and eleven campaigning groups in a public appeal to the government to halt any expansion of Heathrow Airport. The government is currently proposing to develop a 'mixed-mode' use of the existing two runways, which will allow an extra 60,000 aircraft movements a year, and to building a new runway capable of adding a further 230,000 flights a year.

ASLEF has decided to give its full support to opposition to the expansion of Heathrow. Obviously we are inclined towards any initiative that will assist rail, but we're not part of this campaign simply because of self-interest. We also believe that

- if the government continues to expand UK airports, it may as well tell the international community now that it's not serious about meeting the promises it has made about cutting CO₂ emissions

- arguments about 'supporting a business need' for a third airport just don't add up. Business travel accounts for 25% of plane journeys but research by the Campaign for

Better Transport (CBT) shows that businesses are increasingly inclined towards rail, or cutting out travel by using teleconferencing.

- the government should encourage travellers to use low-carbon alternatives like trains. ASLEF believes high-speed north-south rail could virtually eliminate short-haul business flights. Even now many journeys are, door-to-door, quicker by train.

When will a final decision be made? That is very difficult to tell. At the time of going to press the media suggests it will either be some time this month, or that as it won't be enacted until 2020, it will be put off for a future government. It's that precise!!

This is the wording of a letter that the alliance sent to Transport Minister Geoff Hoon, and to the national press:

'Dear Geoff Hoon

The case for expansion at Heathrow just doesn't add up and the plans must be scrapped. If the government pushes ahead with expanding our airports, including Heathrow, the UK will never be able to meet the new target of cutting emissions by at least 80% by 2050 and play its part in fighting climate change.

The economic case for building a third runway is unproven. With current plans in the region of £13 billion, money would be better spent on a low-carbon and efficient high-speed rail network linking the UK's major cities with the rest of Europe.

As trade unions and organisations that represent over 5 million people, we believe the money should be invested in infrastructure like the rail network which would create jobs, generate business and help in the fight against climate change.'

The letter was signed by the unions ASLEF, Connect, the Public and Commercial Services Union, RMT, TSSA, UNISON and by campaign groups the Campaign for Better Transport, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Friends of the Earth, Green Alliance, Greenpeace, HACAN ClearSkies, NoTRAG, Restore UK, the World Development Movement, Aviation Environment Federation and the 2M group.



WHO IS AGAINST HEATHROW EXPANSION?

**ALLY A: MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
GROUNDS: DESIRE TO REFLECT
CONSTITUENTS VIEWS (AND
POSSIBLY HOLD ONTO SEATS!)**

One hundred and five MPs to date have signed this House of Commons Early Day Motion (EDM):

'That this House urges the Government to rethink its plans for a third runway at Heathrow Airport and to give full consideration to alternative solutions; regrets the Government's heavy reliance on data supplied by the BAA in assessing the case for expansion and notes the likely forthcoming break up of BAA's ownership of three of London's airports following the investigation by the Competition Committee; believes that the consultation paper Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport was deeply flawed, as it paid insufficient regard to the costs of air and noise pollution in the surrounding areas and the commitment to curb carbon dioxide emissions to



HEATHROW EXPANSION?

tackle climate change; regrets the fact that provisions to improve high speed rail lines from Heathrow to major cities have not been fully explored, along with the potential of other UK airports to handle more long haul flights; and urges the Government to initiate a consultation on a new national planning policy statement on the theme of airports and high speed rail.'

The EDM was introduced by John Grogan, the Labour MP for Selby – and, as you can see from these politicians' comments, it has support across the political spectrum ...



● John McDonnell, Labour MP, Hayes and Harlington
'If Heathrow gets its third runway this will mean the forced relocation of 10,000 people. It will be the biggest clearance since the Highland clearances.'



● Justine Greening, Conservative MP, Putney
'We simply cannot continue to develop Heathrow until it bursts at the seams. At some point, we must draw a line in the sand and say, 'Thus far and no further'. I believe we have reached that line and, in many respects, crossed it.'



● Vincent Cable, Liberal Democrat, Twickenham
'There will be massive opposition in South West London even from those who supported Terminal 5. The new runway will generate more flights and more environmental pollution, both noise and poorer air quality.'

Public condemnation has come from West London MP and Health Minister Ann Keen and Cabinet Ministers Hilary Benn, John Denham and David Milliband are reportedly uneasy.

ALLY B: LOCAL COUNCILS 2M GROUNDS: STRESS ON NOISE LEVELS

Local councils that represent about two million local residents who they say would be affected by aircraft taking off or landing at the airport, joined forces to form the 2M Group. They say, 'Government claims that a third runway can be built without extending noise nuisance throughout south and west London are simply not credible.'

2M accuses the government of 'keeping secret' the results of models carried out by civil servants working with BAA – the airport's operator - showing how both air pollution and noise levels can be contained. It also says that the Department for Transport has ignored an internal departmental report on Attitudes to Noise from Aviation Sources in England which found that residents had become increasingly annoyed by a growth in flight movements around Heathrow.

Wandsworth Council leader Edward Lister insists, 'The Government is asking us to trust that by the time the third runway is built there will be an entirely new fleet of quieter aircraft flying' and he adds, 'We were told in 2003 that Terminal 5 would be operated without adding extra flights as aircraft were going to get bigger. We were also assured that a fifth terminal would avoid the need for a third runway.'

ALLY C: PLANE STUPID GROUNDS: THEY THINK WE'RE NOT BEING GIVEN HONEST INFORMATION



Plane Stupid begin their arguments with this provocative question – 'Whatdya think about aviation? Like the quick trips to New York to do Christmas shopping but hate the roar of jets overhead? Think we've broadened our horizons but terrified of climate change? Think your travel is essential but everyone else is binge flying? Then congratulations! You're a member of the British public!'

The group says that the public is confused

about airport expansion and climate change, and quote a few recent opinion polls to back up their argument. Recently, for example, surveys reported these contradictory conclusions:

- 48% of people think we should expand our airports to boost the economy
- 60% think we should limit expansion to protect the local environment
- 56% oppose expansion on climate change grounds
- 22% of people simultaneously want to expand airports and limit their expansion!

Plane Stupid sees a whole advertising and media industry dedicated to 'brainwashing' us into air travel. But, it says, they're losing. 'Every year more people are convinced that cheap flights aren't the awesomeness they were made out to be.'

ALLY D: NOTRAG (NO THIRD RUNWAY ACTION GROUP)



GROUNDS: THEY ARE CONCERNED AT THE LOSS OF HOMES AND LOCAL DISRUPTION

NoTRAG is a residents' organisation, supported by the London Borough of Hillingdon. It claims that a third runway will destroy Sipson Village, a part of Harmondsworth, and will reduce the size of Harlington.

It says that over 700 homes will be lost. A spokesperson for the group says, 'If a third runway were to be built it will not only be bricks and mortar that will be destroyed. The years of effort and hard work local people have put into creating a living community will be gone.'

'It is not possible to reconstruct any community once the most important element has been spread to the four winds - the people.'

ALLY E: GREENPEACE



GROUNDS: ENVIRONMENTAL

Greenpeace obviously voices the environmental issues, like dangers of nitrous oxide pollution, but also insists that expansion is unnecessary. This is because almost a quarter of flights from Heathrow are to destinations less than 500 km away, and already well served by train. 'Substituting these flights for train services would reduce the need for extra capacity at Heathrow and have significant environmental benefits, as train travel does ten times less damage to the climate than flying,' it says.

It also argues that more air travel damages the UK economy. '67% of passengers travelling on flights from UK airports are UK residents. This means fewer people are holidaying at home - which contributes to a £17 billion annual tourist deficit in the UK.'

'70% of people in the UK are opposed to building bigger airports,' Greenpeace says. 'Doesn't a majority of this size mean anything in a democracy?'

STEVE REMEMBERS AINTREE'S MOTIVE POWER ENGINES

Last month we came across two stories from Merseyside. We discovered that 85-year-old Steve Raymond had been recording his memories of Aintree's Motive Power Engine Shed - and **Lee Davies** had followed up a story in the Journal about an exhibition in Liverpool about the Spanish Civil War ...

STEVE RAYMOND retired twenty years ago, but he always promised himself that he'd write something about a place that was central to his working life - the motive power engine shed at Aintree, just outside Liverpool.

'I went back there to see what was left earlier this year,' Steve says. 'Where once there was so much activity and bustle, now there's a wasteland surrounded by an iron

fence. The 'Old Lady' finally closed in 1967 after an 81-year working life.'

It was very different when Steve first worked there. 'The engine shed was always smoky, dirty and oily with all kinds of equipment lying around such as washing out pipes, boiler tools, sand buckets and others - not forgetting the 4ft deep engine pits - and it was always busy.'

Next to the Loco Shed was

the Aintree Grid with its 18 miles of track. 'It worked non-stop, seven days and nights, 52 weeks a year,' Steve says. 'Because Aintree Loco was mainly a Freight Depot, 80% of trains that worked from this north end of Liverpool mainly worked during the hours of darkness.'

In his short booklet Steve provides a host of information about the Shed's history and the countless locos that ran from it, but some of his best stories are the ones with a human touch. He remembers cycling to work to a Shed where the toilet and washing facilities were 'nil' to work massively unsociable shifts. But that, he says, was highly acceptable compared with the place they lodged at Rowsley in Derbyshire.

'We used to lodge in this small cottage in the village, but because there was another set of men in bed, we would often have to wait until they got up! Then, without changing the bed linen, we would jump into an already-warm bed! Primitive? You can say that again!'

It was conditions like this that prompted Steve to become active in ASLEF. In his time he served as branch chairman and LDC representative. He says the people mattered to him even more than the Shed. 'Think of the hundreds of drivers and firemen who booked on and off duty there - not forgetting the fitters, boiler workers, washer-outs, steam raisers, the office and other staff.'

Understandably one of the biggest days of the year was

FINDING BRIGADEER UNCLE TOM

WHEN Lee Davies from the union's Gateshead and Newcastle Branch read an article in the October Journal about an exhibition in Liverpool about the Spanish Civil War, he decided to pay it a visit. Lee's family have a direct link because he has a great-uncle who was a volunteer with the North-West Brigade.

'I was lucky from the start,' Lee says. 'I looked up the People's Centre in Liverpool to see if the exhibition was still on in late October. Luckily it had been extended by four weeks, which meant I could go along when I visited family on the Wirral.'

Lee took his parents with him to see if there was any mention of his mother's uncle, Thomas Hadwin. 'When I was young, I used to go to West Kirby to see 'Uncle Tom' as we knew him,' Lee says. The family was delighted to discover that the exhibition included information, photos and even letters about Thomas. 'It was amazing to read what he actually did in those dark days.'

Lee's visit encouraged Tom's daughters, who are both in their 80s, to visit the exhibition later. 'My mum, her sister and Tom's two daughters were met personally by Danny, who is one of the members of the Merseyside International Brigades Network (www.mibnet.org). It was a touching and emotional visit for them and brought back many memories,' Lee says. 'It was moving for them to know that Tom's bravery and commitment were still being celebrated today.'

'And there's another ASLEF connection as well,' Lee says. 'One of Tom's daughters is married to a retired Lime Street driver.'



Tommy Hadwin, Republican Navy



'Uncle' Tommy Hadwin is second from right in this 1937 Republican Navy picture

Merseyside Memories



The Shed today – more Kew Gardens than Locomotive Shed



The cover of Steve's booklet



Steve at work in the 1960s and Steve today (right)



the Aintree Grand National, which was, he says, 'a train-spotters paradise'. 'Every known class of engine was there from all over the country on that day, and the shed was full of top railway officials, doing their best to look important'.

He paints a sorry picture of the deserted shed today, but as he says, 'Time marches on,' and he feels at least that he,

and his generation of drivers, did a great deal to ensure that modern day drivers enjoy conditions which, while by no means perfect, are a massive improvement on those he enjoyed when he first stepped into the Aintree Motive Power Engine Shed.

• Anyone wanting to get hold of Steve's booklet can do so by calling him on author on 01704 540 780.



Volunteer Jack Jones with ASLEF officer Colin Smith at the exhibition



Tommy Hadwin and other sailors of the Republican Naval vessel Alcala Galiano

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RUSTY AND JJ LEAVE THE STREET

ON Saturday 4 October the Liverpool Street Welfare and Social Club hosted their Annual Re-Union at the Railway Tavern Hotel in Stratford. The occasion was also a celebration to mark the retirement of John Rust ('Rusty'), who retired in August after 46 and a half years, and John Jones ('J.J.') who retired in October after 47 years service. The event was very well attended by family and friends with many past and present colleagues coming to wish them both well.

Rusty started his career in March 1962 at March Depot as engine cleaner, progressing up to second man until he transferred to Stratford in 1975 as a driver. John stayed at Stratford until closure when his seniority took him to Liverpool Street where he remained until retirement. During his career, he has seen many parts of the country and worked all different types of traction, although he finished at Liverpool Street working the Intercity services to Norwich for Intercity Anglia, Anglia Railways, One Railway then National Express East Anglia. Also, in more recent times, he worked the now-gone Anglia Crosslink service to Basingstoke, and when Liverpool Street men were seconded to work Hull Trains Services on the ECML. Rusty served on the LDC at Liverpool Street for a while, and held the position of Vice Chairman for the Club for many years, but now feels the time is right to have his well earned rest in retirement.

J.J. started at Stratford in October 1961, and spent his entire career there until the depot closure in '94 when he also moved to Liverpool Street (with Rusty and many others) to work for Intercity Anglia, throughout the various name changes, to National Express East Anglia, also working the Intercity services to/from Norwich. J.J. also worked on the ECML on the Hull Trains service between 2001 and 2002.

For the past several years, John has had the respected honour of holding the 'Senior man' title at Liverpool Street but it's now time to hang up the trophy as he ventures off to a well deserved rest. John served as a Trustee for the Club for a number of years. It is testament to the well-being of the Club that both John's served their positions so well that enables the Liverpool Street W&S Club to provide functions like this.

The LSW&S Club presented both Rusty and J.J. with gifts, along with their retirement bonus from the Club of £400. Rusty's wife Kathy also received some



Andy Morrison (left) and Nigel Gibson (right) with the two Johns – Rust and Jones

flowers from us all, as she too has had to put up with many years of 'railway life' - (and many years of John!). Following the presentations, Andy Morrison District Organiser and Nigel Gibson EC Member presented them with their certificates from ASLEF, and made quite touching speeches to honour them for their long and loyal service to both the industry and the Union.

On behalf of the Club. I would like to wish both John Rust and John Jones all the very best wishes for a long, happy

and healthy retirement and to remind them to keep in touch, which we shall all no doubt do from time to time. Also, thanks go to everybody who attended as I am sure Rusty and J.J. would agree that they received a tremendous send-off which just goes to show how much they will both be missed by all who had the pleasure of working with them. Thanks too to Andy Morrison and Nigel Gibson for taking time out of their busy schedules to visit us and make the ASLEF presentations.



HAVE YOU SEEN THESE MEN?

They are wanted for spending their children's inheritance. They were last seen at Rainham Social club on the 2nd October laughing, joking and telling tales - in other words spending their hard-earned cash in the pursuit of happiness.

In short, this event was the last of the four reunions held this year by the Gillingham retired members section. Once again these men were 'done proud'. They were welcomed, fed and the staff at the club ensured they did not go home dry.

So if you're lucky you will find them at the 2009 round of pleasure on the following dates: 22 January at Ashford, 2 April at Ramsgate, 2 July at Tonbridge, 1 October at Rainham. Each event begins at 1100 hrs, so come on out and join them! This offer is open to those of you still working or have worked on the Southern.

And don't forget to dig deep when supporting the raffle!

Peter Smith Reporter - Retired Members Section

WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

A century ago the Journal gave a marvellous account of the opening of the Tredgar Branch, while 50 years ago it regretted a lack of investment in rail

100 YEARS AGO

The December 1908 report from Organising Secretary H.Parfitt shows the vigour and determination of our predecessors as ASLEF members

"On Sunday, November 8th, I attended a meeting at the Temperance Hall, Tredegar, for the purpose of opening a branch of our Society among the London and North-Western men living there.....

The thanks of the Society are due to four members of Aberbeeg Branch, who walked from Ebbw Vale to attend this branch opening, the chairman and secretary being among the four; also to Messrs. Killick and Hobbs, who walked over the mountains from Dowlais to Tredegar, a distance of seven miles, and the two parties had to walk back again at night. I accompanied the Dowlais contingent. Fortunately it was a lovely moonlight night, we had a dry road (I am not alluding to Sunday closing), and grand views from the mountain tops (not taps), and as we were elevated to the extent of about 1,300 feet above the level of the sea the heat was not at all oppressive. Mr Killick is responsible for these figures – in view of the German scare he has been studying Ordnance maps, fearing an attempt should be made to steal Dowlais, which with its flaming furnaces, is perched on one of these elevations, and to those who know it, with its miserable wages, its hovels, its poverty and its foreigners, it suggests the idea at night of an inverted Hades. It won't be stolen."

50 YEARS AGO

Organising Secretary A. Patterson explained his view of capital investment in rail in the December 1958 edition of the Journal ...



"A deficit of about £20,000,000 above that of 1957 on British Railways headlined across the front pages of the morning newspapers should serve as a grim warning as to just exactly where the financial policy of the present Government is leading

us. We are told that this is chiefly due to a fall in freight receipts from the coal and steel industries. Let us not forget that the recession in these industries is mainly due to this Government's curtailment of capital investment. This, they tell us, was to avoid inflation, but how this can be reconciled with the recent removal of restrictions on hire purchase is most difficult to appreciate. Meanwhile, as they blunder along, "this party of great vested interests", as they were called by Churchill in Liberal days, the figures for those unemployed continue to mount towards the figure which they contend is necessary to achieve a healthy economy. Away with them, before they drag us back to the conditions of the "hungry thirties"!

*Extracts selected and edited
by Jane Pimlott*



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•
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UPCOMING EVENTS

STRATFORD - 31 JANUARY The Stratford Depot Reunion 2009 will be held on Saturday 31st January 2009. It will start at 1900 and go on until late! The venue is the Railway Tavern, Angel Lane, Stratford. All are welcome, and a buffet will be supplied.

Discounted accommodation is available at the Tavern for those travelling from afar. For details of this please contact Jan or Tom on 020 8534 3123 and quote 'Railway Re-union' www.railwaytavernhotel.co.uk

Details of the event can be obtained from Barry Moore's email which is barry.moore360@ntlworld.com

OPEN MEETING IN SOUTH WALES

ASLEF is organising an open branch meeting in the Grand Hotel Swansea at 1730 hrs on Friday 30 January 2009 to discuss local issues in South Wales. Speakers will include Sian James MP, Dr Hywel Francis MP, Chair of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee and Andrew Davies, Welsh Finance Minister. All ASLEF members from South Wales and beyond are welcome to attend.

EDGE HILL REUNION The next Edge Hill Reunion will take place at Our Lady's, Chestnut Grove, Wavertree on 13 Feb 2009 at 1930 hrs.

All ex-staff from Lime Street – drivers, guards or fitters – Virgin and Northern train crews and anyone with connections to Edge Hill Depot are welcome – young, old, friends and families! Contact D.C. Osborne for the retired members committee.

SALTLEY PEPPERED WITH PRESENTATIONS

ON Saturday 18 October the Saltley Branch combined an extraordinary branch meeting, a presentation and an AGM at which the branch officers for 2009 were elected. They have my best wishes for the year ahead.

Our district officer Mick Whelan and EC member Dave Calfe attended to make the presentations. There were a number of long service badges, including two recognising 45 years service for Brothers M. Farkas and S. Howells. We also presented retirement certificates and gifts to Bros S. Nelson (EWSI) and M. Bond (FTL Intermodal) who are both leaving the industry on health grounds. We wish them well for the future.

I have to say that the function was not as well attended as I would like for a branch of our size. It may be the result of ASLEF going down the line of fragmenting the union with consultative committees, like the government did with the rail industry with privatisation. Let's get the rank and file members back into the branch room and revive the old ASLEF motto 'Unity'. Besides, 'Proud to be union' is bad English anyway!

P. Crayon Secretary – Saltley Branch

TRAGIC DEATH OF DAVEY JOHNSON AT 41 Tyne Yard branch is sad to report the tragic death of Driver David 'Davey' Johnson, aged 41, who was killed on 14 August in a motoring accident. This took place on the A1 while he was returning home from work in the early hours of the morning.

Our deepest sympathies go to his wife Linda, family, friends, and colleagues.

Davey joined British Rail as a traction trainee at Newcastle on 3 November 1986. He then became a driver's assistant in December of the same year. He was promoted to driver in training in 1989 and appointed as a driver at Tyne Yard in October 1994 where he remained until his untimely death.

Davey was a well-liked popular colleague who was consistently keen and willing to help anybody out. He was always of a cheerful, laid-back disposition. We'll particularly remember his sociable character, standing there with his pint and fags. He took his responsibilities seriously and was always a loyal and much-valued ASLEF member.

Davey was a highly skilled, professional train driver. He also had other skills outside work. A keen DIY enthusiast, he had recently passed a course in tiling.

We'll all miss Davey. Although he's gone, he'll never be forgotten. His death has had – and continues to have – a profound effect on the depot.

Rest in peace, Davey.

COLIN THORNHILL – Chair – Tyne Yard Branch

PETER EARNSHAW - A BIG MAN It is with real sadness that I report the death of a real Newton Heath depot character - Peter Earnshaw. Peter died peacefully at his home on 5 September following a short illness. He was aged 72.

Peter was born into loco life. He followed his dad Herbert into his depot shed in 1955. He was well-known to all the men there, regardless of grade, for his friendly humour and quick wit. By being 'just Peter' he could turn anyone's bad time into not such a bad time.

His army service for the two years after 1955 took him to Berlin with his local Manchester regiment. He then returned to the footplate until he retired on ill-health grounds in 1999. He spent his final nine years with his family Ann, Mark and Paul and his grandchildren. Our thoughts are with them at this sad time.

Rest in peace, old friend.

S. BLACK – Retired Members Section

BRIAN CALLAGHAN - A TRUE BLUE FRIEND It is with deep regret that I have to inform you of the death of Brian Callaghan. 'Cally' sadly died in Liege in Belgium where he went with friends to watch his beloved Everton.

'Cally' began as a Railman (25/9/1978) at Mollington Street where he became a Traction Trainee in 1979. He was promoted to Relief Driver at Liverpool Lime Street in 1984 before coming to Kirkdale as a Driver in 1985.

He was what ASLEF is all about - being there for anybody at any time, always ready with help and advice. 'Cally' represented members as a local rep, branch secretary, branch chair and AAD delegate. He also played a major role in our 1998 restructuring.

He will be sadly missed and never forgotten by all his friends and colleagues. This was confirmed by the unbelievable turn out at his funeral which included ASLEF members past and present from all over the country.

All our thoughts are with the two people that meant most to Brian - his partner Belinda and his daughter Phoebe.

PAUL HART - Kirkdale

EDDIE WATSON - A HEART OF GOLD It is with great sadness that I inform you of the death of driver Hugh 'Eddie' Watson at the age of 58. Eddie started his railway career as a freight guard in 1975 and moved to the foot-plate line of promotion in 1988.

He retired through ill health in March 2008 and featured in the October journal having been presented with his ASLEF retirement certificate by Kevin Lindsay.

Eddie was always his own man and was always trying to find ways to 'work it up' management, and quite often had very good 'debates' with his work mates - especially myself! But deep down he had a heart of gold and was always there for his colleagues in their hour of need.

He is survived by wife Nancy, son Scot and his beloved grandchildren.

FRANK CARROLL Chairman - Ayr branch

MICK TODD - A MOVING TRIBUTE One of our Knottingley drivers, Mick Todd, has died at the age of 67. I went to his funeral at Skicklepath in Barnstaple and, along with many of my colleagues who attended, was greatly moved by the emotional speech given by his step-daughter, Vanessa. She fought back the tears as she said, 'You came into my life when I was three years old and when I had no real dad to call my own. You showed me I was special and you made my mum smile again. As I grew older you knew just what to say to encourage me to make the best of my life. Mick, you gave me everything you had, and asked for nothing in return.'

It was a fitting tribute to Mick, a friend to everyone at Knottingley and a true legend. Rest in peace.

A. MCTIGUE West Yorks

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YOU TELL US

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

MORE EMPLOYMENT, LESS WORKING REST DAYS

I WRITE in reply to Brother Steve Hill from Newton Heath branch. It is saddening to see such requests being made in the Locomotive Journal as the country enters recession.

I have been on the footplate for 34 years and, although I've lived and worked through many recessions, I've not worked a rest day for 11 years. Not once have I been threatened with redundancy, a shorter working week or a wage cut - but I know of many outside our industry who have.

So surely we should be grateful for the security the railway gives us. Perhaps instead of asking, 'When are we going to get our overtime back?', we should be saying to the companies, 'You don't have enough drivers - so you'd better start employing more.' That way some of those poor people (which could include our own colleagues in the freight sector who are losing their jobs and houses) will be given the same opportunity as we have had.

Like Brother Davies, I despair

PAY RESPECTS IN THE CEMETERY★

HAVE you noticed that nowadays there seems to be a habit of making a small shrine by placing bunches of flowers, candles and even cuddly toys where someone died? I don't know why or when this habit started, but it does seem to be growing more common. I can't remember it happening 20 years ago and I'm struggling to remember it even ten years ago. These shrines are quite often attached to lampposts, fences or just placed at the ends of platforms.

In today's health and safety culture, it does surprise me that there does not seem to be any regulation or policy about where these shrines can be located or how long they should remain. They can stay there for months on end and may get renewed every anniversary or special date such as a birthday.

I find it worrying that people are allowed to make these shrines. Grieving people on railway premises could be a danger to themselves, especially where trains pass close by.

Also I don't like to be reminded that someone died at that spot when I drive past one, sometimes three or four times in a shift. I imagine this must be even worse for the driver of a train involved as they will never forget. But do they need to be reminded each and every time they pass the spot?

I have always thought that there is a correct place to pay respects to the dead. That place is the cemetery. Is there a way that we can start to get these shrines removed - and to persuade the friends and families of the deceased to realise that the place to pay respects is the cemetery?

I think this might attract some bad press at first, but hopefully people will get the message and it will stop this growing habit.

CHRIS HAYES - London

at Thatcher's legacy of, 'I'm alright - so pull the ladder up.'

Roy Luxford - Three Bridges

PAY YOUR MONEY - AND DON'T TAKE YOUR CHANCE!

IT'S like an insurance policy. You pay your money every month not really knowing whether it will be worth it in the end. I'd just like to confirm that being a member of ASLEF is worth every penny.

Can I take this opportunity to thank Steve Hope, Daz Morgan, and Ian Bloodworth at local level, and Tosh MacDonald and Nick Whitehead at executive level for the support they have afforded me during what has been a difficult period for myself.

It is very reassuring to know that, when required, there is a great team of individuals available to represent all members.

Thank you once more.

Brian McLaughlin - Driver - Freightliner Heavy Haul

THANKS TO YOU

I WOULD like to take this opportunity to thank all our loyal members in Leeds, Harrogate and Huddersfield who voted for me in the recent

DEC elections. Their loyalty and support to ASLEF was overwhelming. I look forward to the challenges ahead and with the successful election of Bros. R Porter, G Cox and R Coulthard from the East you can be assured of a strong and committed council.

Three of the four seats in this area were challenged by the RMT and they were spectacularly defeated. The membership has spoken. They want the right union that can, and will, represent them - and that union is ASLEF.

Special thanks to Nick Whitehead District Organiser 4, Tosh McDonald EC member District 4, for their support

during this election.

Pauline Cawood - Chair - DEC East

ASLEF WAS THERE FOR ME

FOLLOWING my diagnosis with acute myeloid leukaemia in May this year, I was admitted to the Royal Marsden hospital in Sutton for treatment. I had four courses of chemo and went into remission on the first hit. Fortunately I'm still in remission and I was able to return to work on 8 October.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the union reps of Selhurst branch for visiting me and supporting me

Change of address form

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Phone.....

Branch.....

Membership No.....

Employer.....

throughout my treatment and to my return to work. Some people deserve special mention – especially Bro Ray ‘Mad Dog’ D’souza who visited me in hospital and made sure my sick notes reached the depot; our branch secretary Bro Andy ‘Cooky’ Cook for keeping all my colleagues at work informed of my progress and for encouraging them to send me loads of supporting emails; Bro Alex ‘Respect’ Holness for his messages of support; Bro Ian ‘Ninja’ Heriman for visiting and giving me a laugh at the low times (you know the story, Ninja!); Bro Mick ‘633 squadron’ Curtis for being a special mate; and to all my colleagues at Selhurst for their messages of support. You kept me smiling even at the low times.

Times like this bring out the best in people. To ASLEF’s Selhurst branch and all my colleagues: a big thank you.

Rich Castle - Selhurst Branch

RECOMMENDING THOMPSONS

I HEARTILY recommend Thompsons the solicitors. Last May I broke my ankle in a fall at work. I made a claim through my local East Ham ASLEF branch.

This was processed by our health and safety man, Mark McMullen. He took my statement, took photographs and pushed through my claim.

Earlier this month I received my compensation.

I’d like to thank all at Thompsons for their efficient handling of the case.

B. Gill – Train Operator – Barking District Line.

ARE SPEED CALCULATORS BARMY?

IS IT just me - or is the idea of Average Speed Calculators plain barmy?

EWS is issuing drivers with calculators to work out their average fuel efficient speed using the following formula; miles travelled ‘x’ 60 divided by minutes.

Two examples are Bletchley

to Bedford = 12.3 mph and Bletchley- Bescot = 38 mph.

Do ASLEF and Network Rail endorse these latest gimmicks ... sorry, briefings?

I hope not!

D Fowkes – Driver – EWS

WE’RE NATIONWIDE!

I WAS employed by First Capital Connect at Bedford when unfortunately I had a fatality in June. I changed companies to East Midlands Trains at Derby in September. In October I was summoned to appear at the Coroners Court. When I contacted FCC management about accompanying me to the inquest, they chose to abandon me – and they wouldn’t even allow a rep to attend on their rest day! So my heartfelt thanks go to EMT management and my ASLEF friends who - with only a day’s notice - organised a London rep and Derby DSM to look after me on this difficult day.

Phill Amies – Derby

WELL DONE NIGEL!

I WOULD like to thank Thompsons solicitors for finally settling my claim concerning an injury to my neck in December 2003. I seriously strained ligaments in my neck during a ‘look back’ manoeuvre whilst working a DOO passenger service train.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please contact Sarah Francis on 020 7317 8600 or sfrancis@aslef.org.uk

PORT TALBOT CENTENARY The Port Talbot branch has struck a badge to celebrate its centenary year. A limited number are available for £5, which includes postage and packing. Contact Branch Secretary D. Curtis at 32 Greenwood Road, Baglan, Port Talbot SA12 8PR. Cheques should be made payable to ‘ASLEF Port Talbot Branch Centenary Acct’



LONGSIGHT BRANCH has produced a Commemorative Badge Limited to 500 Numbered Copies. They are available for £5.00 plus £1 p&p from the Branch Secretary Fred Clarke at 80 Brookfield Avenue, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 1JE. Please make cheques payable to F.Clarke.

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TOC’s now seem to be realising that ‘DOO look back’ is an inferior and out of date method of working and more forward facing monitors/mirrors are needed. They are surely less detrimental to a driver’s well-being but there is still more

that needs to be done.

I would also like to thank ASLEF for its support. Special thanks go to Nigel Gibson for all his encouragement and help over the last five years.

Sis Lesley Clark - Bishops Stortford



PUB SIGN: Finally, many thanks to P.J. Smith for this evidence of equality in society. He claims that after all these years of baby crèches, it is a major step forward to have them available for fully grown men!

TAKING LIBERTIES AT ST PANCRAS

The British Library, just next to St Pancras Station, is, until March next year, staging an interesting and thought-provoking exhibition called 'Taking Liberties'. The idea of a 'library' has changed a lot since it involved stern staff clamping down on whispering: in fact this exhibition really is something to shout about

WHEN YOU GO TO AN EXHIBITION, you expect to be told something, so you can go out with a fresh armful of facts under your arm. Taking Liberties doesn't work like that, which is what makes it so fascinating. It ends up asking more questions than it answers – because 'freedom' is the most difficult and complex word to define. People at opposite ends of the political spectrum have all called upon this very same word to justify their beliefs – from communists to fascists, from war leaders to pacifists.

The exhibition – like the word – is a mass of seeming contradictions. There are times we celebrate and admire the courage and dedication of those seeking civil liberties – and others when we are alarmed at how casually we can cast them aside.

CARELESS OF OUR RIGHTS

The Magna Carta (the 'great charter') of 1215 is the first document on display, and deservedly so. This document established for the first time the

basis of the rights of UK citizens – although not many of us were considered citizens in those days! But here it is, this seminal document that guarantees, among other things 'habeas corpus' – that is, the basic freedom from detention without trial.

Next to it a screen plays out politicians debating this government's wish to detain people for 42 days without charging them. And what is the reaction of our citizens to the loss of a liberty enshrined almost 800 years ago? A poll by ICM in June 2008 said that 65% of people were prepared to back the government. Similarly, the battle for press freedom has been going on ever since the first pamphlet was printed – and as recently as 1810 the MP Francis Burdett was sent to the Tower because Parliament had 'imprisoned a man for protesting against the exclusion of reporters during a debate'.

Yet only last month the government's Intelligence and Security Committee was demanding laws that would prevent news outlets from reporting stories deemed by the

Government to be 'against the interests of national security'.

There is no doubt that it is much easier to lose our liberties than gain them.

Our thoughts – and prejudices – are constantly challenged and expanded in this exhibition. 'Freedom' is a word that stretches across politics to religion, class, colour, creed and sexuality. Small wonder that it is overused to the extent that its meaning can be distorted or simply lost.

RIGHTS NOT DUTIES

The start of the exhibition is the Magna Carta because it established the fact that citizens have rights rather than duties. It points out that we take our rights for granted, but that they didn't 'suddenly happen'. As the catalogues points out, 'They were hard won, the product of hundreds of years of debate, struggle, bloodshed and war. Many people died for them: heroes, villains, and some who were both.'

It challenges people to ask all kinds of questions about liberty. Were the men who signed Charles 1's death-warrant acting in the name of liberty? (The actual document is here to see). And if so, why were they later hounded and executed? How has Gerry Adams changed from being a criminal to being a respectable politician? What prevented, and encouraged, the Scots and Welsh seeking 'freedom' from England?

EXHIBITS FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

Another of the extraordinary features of the exhibition is that it doesn't exclusively show the grand proclamations of the 'great and the good'. It also has the private belongings of those 'ordinary people' who have made an indelible mark on British liberties. One touching item is the purse that belonged to Emily Davison, the suffragette who threw herself under the King's horse in the 1913 Epsom Derby. Inside was her return rail ticket to London. There are also drawings that the Chartist Ernest Jones sketched in prison. There are records of the Working Men's Association which led to the formation of the Chartists.

The wide range of this exhibition stretches to areas including the setting up of the improvement societies and the trade unions; the 1889 Dock Strike, the Oz Obscenity trial and the religious discriminations (like the Jews being expelled from the kingdom in 1290 by Edward 1 and not formally re-admitted for almost 400 years).

This is a highly recommended way of passing an hour or so in a useful and thoughtful way. I'm sure when you emerge that you'll agree that there's nothing wrong with taking liberties! It's just difficult to define what they are

● 'Taking Liberties' will be at the British Library, next to St Pancras station, until 1 March 2009. Admission free.



Scots banners



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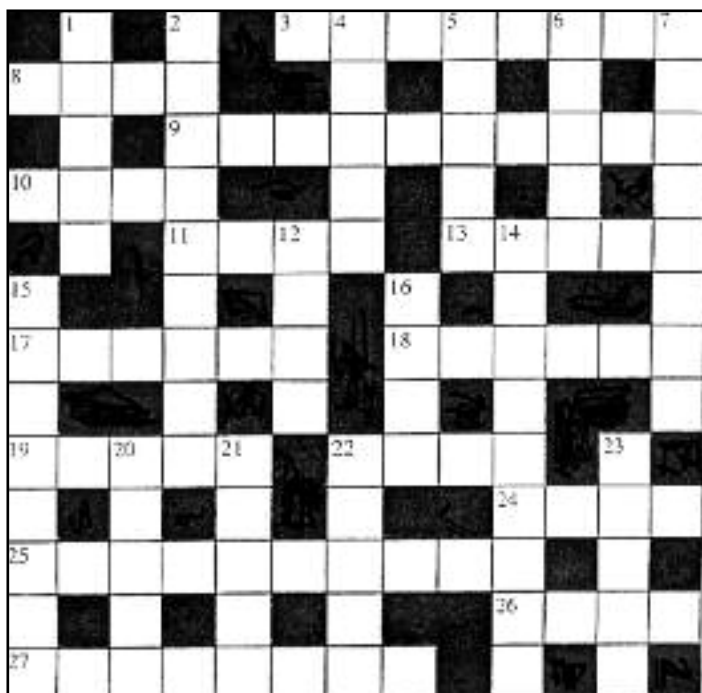
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ASLEF *more than just a union*



Prize Crossword No. 32

set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 31 which appeared in the November edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **George Watts** from **Billericay** in **Essex**.

ACROSS 1 Sprinters 8 Railway Worker 11 Road 12 Rival 13 Real 16 Kiddies 17 Harrods 18 Station 20 Cruiser 21 Olga 22 E Mail 23 Once 26 Against The Law 27 Cloakroom **DOWN** 2 Pele 3 Italics 4 Towpath 5 Rare 6 Bag and Baggage 7 Never on Sunday 9 Brake Shoe 10 Old Street 14 Mimic 15 Trout 19 Nemesis 20 Caister 24 Till 25 Zero

Thanks for all your responses to the 31st ASLEF crossword in the November edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

ACROSS

- 3 They go with a bang at Christmas parties! (8)
8 This hired vehicle will mean you don't have to drive! (4)
9 AKA Father Christmas! (5,5)
10 Apartment (4)
11 These are fitted in spectacles and cameras (4)
13 ----- Tanner – former Coronation Street regular (5)
17 Royalty frequently live in one of these (6)
18 The Sahara is one (6)
19 Eight musicians in a group (5)
22 This means 'STOP' (4)
24 You may need one after a few late nights! (4)
25 Old fashioned house plant (10)
26 Brainwave (4)
27 You could feel this after a rowdy party (8)

DOWN

- 4 Former name of the Council Tax (5)
5 Hidden store of things (5)
6 School children have to sit these (5)
7 Police arrest them sometimes (8)
12 Requirement (4)
14 Don't miss this one or you could have to walk (4,5)
15 They perform at the Circus (8)
16 Girl's name (4)
20 Light the candles with this (5)
21 They come in and out (5)
22 Marry in -----, repent at leisure (5)
23 Excellent Union for the Rail Industry (5)

DOWN

- 1 Trains run on these (5)
2 Parasitic plant used as deco-

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25



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